

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 24, 2018
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
HDP-2018-0460
1600 SINGLETON AVENUE

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1939 house.

ARCHITECTURE

One-story, rectangular-plan, side-gabled frame house with a partial-width, front-gabled independent porch and a hipped-roof rear addition; all original windows have been replaced with vinyl windows; front entry door on the north wall of the front porch.

RESEARCH

The house appears to have been built around 1939 by T.H. Johns. The Johns family was from Williamson County, and moved into Austin around 1923, when they purchased this property, which had a ca. 1907 house on it. T.H. Johns was a farmer; he died in 1946. Mary Melvina Johns died in 1960. They raised 8 children in this house, including several public school teachers who attended Tillotson College, and two bellmen for the Driskill Hotel. They had two sets of fraternal twins – Elmer and Felmer, and Edward and Ethward, the latter names referring to the female twin.

After Mary Melvina Johns passed away in 1960, her daughter, Marjorie married a man named William Harris, who had a janitorial services business in this house. They lived here until the early 1970s.

STAFF COMMENTS

The house recommended as contributing to a potential historic district by the East Austin Historical Survey (2016), but staff questions that recommendation as all of the windows in the house have been replaced, and the replacement windows are not sympathetic to the historic character of the house.

Staff has evaluated this house for designation as a historic landmark and has determined that the house does not meet the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in City Code:

- a. **Architecture.** The house is a frame house that hearkens back to earlier forms of architecture, especially with the placement of the front door on the side wall of the front porch. The house has lost its integrity of materials and feeling in the replacement of all the windows with vinyl windows. There does not appear to be any architectural significance to this house.
- b. **Historical association.** The house was owned by the members of the same family from the date of its construction in 1939 until the early 1970s. Thomas H. Johns was a farmer from the Hutto area of Williamson County, who may have moved into Austin so that his children could attend Tillotson College, but that is staff's speculation. Several of Thomas H. Johns' children became public school teachers in Austin, but there do not appear to be any significant historical associations.
- c. **Archaeology.** The house was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
- d. **Community value.** The house does not possess a unique location, physical characteristic, or significant feature that contributes to the character, image,

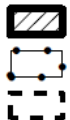
or cultural identity of the city, the neighborhood, or a particular demographic group.

- e. **Landscape feature.** The property is not a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Encourage rehabilitation, reconstruction of missing architectural features, and adaptive re-use, then relocation over demolition, but release the permit upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package, consisting of photographs of all elevations, a dimensioned sketch plan, and a narrative history, for archiving at the Austin History Center. The house does not meet the criteria for individual designation as a historic landmark.

LOCATION MAP



SUBJECT TRACT

PENDING CASE

ZONING BOUNDARY

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: HDP-2018-0460

1600 SINGLETON AVE

1" = 167'

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

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1600 Singleton Avenue
ca. 1939



OCCUPANCY HISTORY
1600 Singleton Avenue

From City Directories, Austin History Center
 Prepared by the City Historic Preservation Office
 September, 2018

1992	Vacant
1985-85	Mrs. Rosie B. Williams, renter Building attendant, University of Texas
1977	Mrs. Rosie B. Williams, renter Custodian, University of Texas NOTE: The directory indicates that Mrs. Rosie B. Williams was a new resident at this address.
1973	Vacant
1968	William and Marjorie J. Harris, owners Proprietor of a janitorial services company (at the house).
1962	William and Marjorie J. Harris, renters William: Janitor, Austin Maintenance Service Company, 1714-B S. Congress Avenue. Marjorie: Teacher, Kealing School. NOTE: Marjorie Harris was the former Marjorie Johns.
1959	Mrs. Mary M. Johns, owner Widow, T.H. Johns No occupation listed
1955	Mrs. Mary M. Johns, owner No occupation listed
1952	Mary M. Johns, owner No occupation listed Also listed is Marjorie Johns, a teacher.
1949	Mrs. Mary M. Johns, owner No occupation listed
1947	M.M. Johns, renter Widow, Thomas H. Johns No occupation listed Also listed are Ethward Johns, a teacher at Blackshear School; and Marjorie Johns, a teacher at Kealing Junior High School.
1944-45	Thomas H. and Mary Johns, owners No occupation listed Also listed are Harriet E. Johns, a public school teacher; and Marjorie Johns, a teacher at Kealing Junior High School.
1942	Thomas H. and Melvina Johns, owners Porter, Lucas and Taylor Service Station.

Also listed are Edward E. Johns, a clerk at the public schools; Elmer Johns, a bellman at the Driskill Hotel; Felmer Johns, a bellman at the Driskill Hotel; H. Ethward Johns, a clerk at the public schools; and Marjorie Johns, a teacher

- 1941 Vacant
NOTE: All members of the Johns family are listed at 2408 E. 16th Street. Edward Johns was a teacher; Elmer Johns was a bellman; Ethward Johns was a public school teacher; Marjorie Johns was a teacher; Theo H. Johns was a bellman, his wife De Forest had no occupation shown; and Thomas H. Johns was a farmer, his wife, M.M. Johns had no occupation shown.
- 1940 Theo H. and DeForest Johns, owners
Bellman, Driskill Hotel
Also listed are Edward E. Johns, a public school teacher, Elmer Johns, a bellman at the Driskill Hotel; Ethward Johns, a public school teacher; Felmer Johns, a bellman at the Driskill Hotel; Marjorie Johns, a public school teacher, and Thomas H. and M.M. Johns; he was a farmer.
NOTE: Thomas H. and Mary Johns are listed at 2408 E. 16th Street; neither had an occupation shown.

NOTE: There was an earlier house on this site, as shown on the 1935 Sanborn map. The earlier house dated from around 1907. It was originally inhabited by Frank Tannehill, the owner of a feed and wagon yard who then became an Austin police officer; he lived in that house until around 1917. The Johns family apparently moved into Austin from Williamson County around 1923, and bought the old Frank Tannehill place, before building this house in 1939. City directories from the 1920s show Thomas H. and Mary M. Melvina living at this address; Johns is listed as a farmer, and had several children enrolled at Tillotson College.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Thomas H. and Melvina Johns (ca. 1939 – ca. 1960)

This house appears to have been built in 1939 by T.H. Johns, but it is unclear whether the T.H. refers to Thomas H. Johns or Theo H. Johns. In either case, Thomas H. and Melvina Johns lived in this house from around 1941 until Melvina passed away in 1960.

The 1920 U.S. Census shows Thomas H. and Mary Johns as the owners of a farm near Hutto in Williamson County, Texas. Thomas H. Johns was 50, had been born in Texas, and was a farmer. Mary Johns was 51, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had 8 children: Eula, 19; George B., 17; Margrette, 15; Theodore H., 13; Elmer A., 11; Felmer, 11; Ethward, 6; and Edard, 6. All of the children had been born in Texas, and none had an occupation shown.

The 1930 U.S. Census shows T.H. and M.M. Johns living in a house they owned in rural Williamson County, Texas. T.H. Johns was 57, had been born in Texas to Mississippi-born parents, and was a cotton farmer. M.M. Johns was 55, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. With them lived one of their sons, Edward, 16, who had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed.

Thomas and Mary Johns were living in a house they owned in rural Williamson County, according to the 1940 U.S. Census. Thomas Johns was 69, had been born in Texas, and was a farmer. Mary Johns was 70, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. None of their children are listed with them.

The 1940 U.S. Census shows this house owned by Marjorie Johns, a daughter of Thomas H. and Melvina Johns. She was 28, had been born in Texas, and was a public school teacher.

With her lived her brother, Elmer Johns, 26, a bellboy at the Driskill Hotel, her sister, Felmer Johns, 26, who had no occupation listed, her brother, Edward Johns, 25, a public school teacher, and her sister, Ethward Johns, 25, a public school teacher. All members of the household had been born in Texas.

Thomas Hays Johns was living at this address at the time of his death in 1946. He was born in 1877 in Hays County, Texas, and was a retired farmer. He is buried in the Round Rock Cemetery. His wife was Mary Melvina Warren Johns (1878 - 1960); his children were Theodore Hayes Johns (1906-1979), Harriet Ethward Johns Farris (1913-1999), and Edward Everett Johns (1914-2000).

Mary Melvina Johns was born in 1878 in San Saba County, Texas, and died while living at this address in 1960. She was a widowed housewife. There do not appear to be obituaries for either Thomas Hays Johns or Mary Melvina Johns in the Austin newspapers.

Unless the Plumbing is done in strict accordance with City Ordinances, do not turn on the water.

PERMIT FOR WATER SERVICE AUSTIN, TEXAS

Nº 3798

M. Address 1600 Singleton Ave.
Plumber Size of Tap 1/4" Date 12-8-31

Foreman's Report

Date of Connection 12-8-31
Size of Tap Made 3/4"
Size Service Made 3/4"
Size Main Tapped 6"
From Front Prop. Line to Curb Cock 7'
From North Prop. Line to Curb Cock 4'
Location of Meter Curb
Type of Box Lock
Depth of Main in St.
Depth of Service Line
From Curb Cock to Tap on Main 14'
Checked by Engr. Dept. 12-10-31 JLA

INDEXED

No. Fittings	Size.	Req. No.
Curb Cock		
Elbow		
St. Elbow		
Bushing		
Reducer		
1 Pipe 3/4" copper + complete		
Lead Comp.		
Nipples		
Union		
Plug		
Tee		
Stop		
Box		
Lid		
Valves		
Foreman's Signature		

Water service permit for this address (1931)

T. H. Johns 1600 Singleton Ave.
38 32&33 11 6 B

Glenwood Addn.

frame res.

297n - 12-7-39

4

Building permit to T.H. Johns for the construction of the current house (1939)

Connection Charge \$ # 1843No. 16404B

APPLICATION FOR SEWER CONNECTION.

Austin, Texas, 12-12 1939To the Superintendent of Sewer and Public Improvements,
City of Austin, Texas

Sir:—

I hereby make application for sewer connection and instructions

on premises owned by T.J. Johnsat 1600 Singleton Street,further described as lot 6, block 11, outlotsubdivision Glenwood Addition, plat 35,which is to be used as a Res.In this place there are to be installed 4 fixtures.

I agree to pay the City Sewer Department the regular ordinance charge.

2' DEEP Respectfully,

ATTEST PL
Stub Out1-4 1940 Permit PD
1-2-40
OVSize of Main 4 inches.Size of Service 4 inches.8 Feet Deep Alley10 Feet from Property Line

Feet from Curb Line

Inspected by BoatrightConnection made by Morris12801Stub out
2' N of SA-1111sewer in alley
SHB DJ

Sewer connection application to T.J. Johns for this house (1939)

T. H. Johns

1600 Singleton Ave.

35

32

11

5-6

B

Glenwood

Garage and storeroom

28652 1-9-46

\$150.00

Owner

2-23-76-155121-Lawrence A. Marshall ~~None~~
 owner - demolish res \$200.00

Building permit to T. H. Johns for a garage and storeroom (1946) with an additional permit to demolish the house in 1976.



The 1935 Sanborn map shows the former ca. 1907 house on this site as well as a small dwelling on the south side of the lot, facing 16th Street – this map shows the smaller house's address as 2410 E. 16th Street, and it is not in the same location as a very small house shown on the 1962 Sanborn map below. Members of the Johns family lived at 2408 E. 16th Street in the late 1930s and early 1940s, but it is not clear if this map is showing that house.



The 1962 Sanborn map shows the current house as well as a small dwelling addressed as 2408 E. 16th Street. The smaller house is no longer extant, but city directories show that members of the Johns family resided at that address in the late 1930s and early 1940s. It is unclear whether this house is the same as shown on the 1935 map above – it is sited much closer to the west property line than the house shown on the earlier map.